

Direct Certification - Frequently Asked Questions

Listed below are some common questions we've received regarding the system, as well as our answers:

Q. How does the Direct Certification system work?

A. The student enrollment information from STARS is sent to Department of Human Services (DHS) data hub. The DHS data is matched with DPI data and the student matches (linkages) are broadcast back to STARS. Districts are notified of matches by e-mail and directed to go into STARS to enroll the students into Direct Certification special program.

Q. Why do we have to worry about Direct Certification?

A. Public Law 110-246, the Child Nutrition and WIC* Reauthorization Act requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to establish systems to directly certify children from households that receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits by School Year (SY) 2008-2009. Under direct certification, children are determined eligible for free school meals without the need for household applications by using data from other means-tested programs.

Q. Why do I have to enroll or not enroll the names on our notifications lists? Aren't the lists themselves enough documentation of a student's eligibility for Direct Certification?

A. By enrolling the students into Direct Certification in STARS, a district is acknowledging that the students are receiving Direct Certification benefits (free meals) at school.

Q. Why do I receive the name of one student on my notification list, but not the name of their sibling?

A. This may occur because the sibling's name was not matched to the district's enrollment, either because the name isn't listed on the district's enrollment in STARS or because the Direct Certification match process was not able to match the student's name to a child receiving SNAP or TANF. Sometimes the student's birth date, gender or name entered in STARS is different from the information listed by the Department of Human Services (DHS), and a match can't be made.

Q. How do I enroll students on my Broadcast Notifications List?

A. Follow the directions on this file, [G/Direct Cert/enrolling from broadcast notifications](#) to enroll a student from the Broadcast Notifications list

Q. What is the difference between the Broadcast Notification List and the Matched Notification List?

A. Students listed on the Broadcast Notifications list are children who are receiving SNAP or TANF, but have not been matched to any school's enrollment in STARS. These names are sent out to the 5 closest schools to the address on file at DHS

Q. Why don't I see a list of names when I click on Matched Notifications?

A. Most of the Direct Certification notifications will show up on the Matched Notifications list. For some of our larger districts, the list can have over 1000 names. To prevent the system from timing out before all of the names can be displayed, the system has been designed to require the user to enter filter criteria (optional) for example, change search criteria to one school and to click on the Search button (required).

Q. There are names of preschool students on my notifications lists. These students don't participate in the school meals programs. Should I enroll them into Direct Certification any way?

A. Students, such as preschoolers or home schooled students, who are enrolled in the district, but do not have access to the school meals programs should not be enrolled in Direct Certification as they would not be included in the free eligible number on the schools claim for reimbursement.

Q. Once I enroll (or not enroll) a student into Direct Certification, the name no longer shows up on the notification list. Why does this happen.

A. Once enrolled (or not enrolled) the students name will show up on the district's Direct Certification export or pdf report, or in the case of not enrolled, the student's name is changed to "No Current Enrollment" status.

Q. I know of some families in our district that are receiving SNAP or TANF, but the student names don't show up on the notification lists.

A. There are a few reasons for this. First, the family isn't actually receiving SNAP or TANF. Some SNAP or TANF beneficiaries receive benefits sporadically. For instance, a family might receive SNAP for a few months while one of the household members is unemployed, but then go off benefits when that person becomes employed again. If the student's enrollment is matched at the time the family isn't receiving SNAP or TANF, the names will not show up on the notifications lists. If the family begins to receive SNAP or TANF later in the school year, the student will become eligible for Direct Certification and the name will show up on the notification lists. **Remember, once a student becomes eligible for direct certification, the eligibility is good for the entire school year and up to 30 school days the next school year, regardless of the income status of the household.**

Q. Where can I get more information on how to use the Direct Certification system?

A. Complete instructions are available at the following link:
<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/child/new/DC-Instructions.pdf>

Q. Is there any way I can look up a student name in the Direct Certification system?

A. Districts may search for students through the Student Lookup link in the left column of their Direct Certification page in STARS. Enter the first and last name (doesn't have to be exact) and birth date (has to be exact) – or – enter a case number (no other information is required). If the student name is found, the district would enroll them just like they do when the name is on the Broadcast Notifications list.

Q. Once we are notified that a student is eligible for Direct Certification (free meals), when does the eligibility begin?

A. The student becomes eligible for free meals through Direct Certification the day the district receives notification of their eligibility.

Q. Do I acknowledge students under Direct Certification if they are homeschoolers in our district?

A. Not usually. The only time you would is if the student does attend the school for a class that is right before or after a meal period. For instance, a home schooled child does attend school to take a Spanish class, which is right before lunch. In this instance, the student should be given the opportunity to participate in the school meal and the school would count the child as free or reduced price or direct cert if they have documentation to support their eligibility.

Q. Our tech. dept. wants to import only the newest DC students into our meal counting system. Can a district export the file for **updated** Direct Certification students only or do they need to get an "ENTIRE" listing each time?

A. The direct certification export includes a column that lists the date of direct certification enrollment. It's the second to last column, labeled DirectCertEnrollmentDate. The date format is year, month, day. So 20130829 is August 29, 2013. You could create the export and then sort it by date. Remove all of the records with dates prior to the last time you imported the students into Nutrikids. Then you will have an export file with just the new kids.

Q. When a child who is directly certified moves out of the district, do we need to into the student's record and unselect the direct certification box?

A. It depends. If a student enrolled in the district but never attended classes and their enrollment record needs to be deleted, then yes, the direct certification mark needs to be removed. However, if a student was attending your school for any length of time and was directly certified and now has transferred out of your district, the direct certification mark should stay.